



CSWE Statement on Field Placements

CSWE requires that accredited baccalaureate and master's programs use a competency-based educational framework to guide students in completing field education courses and community field practica, often referred to as field placements. This requires joint effort on the part of social work programs administering field education programs and on the part of students completing field placements. Field education is the signature pedagogy for social work and is intended to integrate the theoretical and conceptual knowledge acquired across the curriculum with the practical world of a social work practice setting in the community.

CSWE and accredited social work programs view the competencies and experience gained in field courses and practica as essential to becoming a professional social worker who embodies the required competencies and ethics of our profession. Social work is a profession based on public trust and focused on providing responsible care to vulnerable clients and communities. Therefore, CSWE requires 400 hours of field experience for a baccalaureate degree and 900 hours for a master's degree to prepare social work students for their workforce responsibilities through training in field courses. Programs accredited by CSWE's Commission on Accreditation are required to develop a quality experiential field education program under the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS).

CSWE accredited programs are required to vet, develop, and monitor field opportunities where students can observe and practice social work under an experienced, and often licensed, social worker. During these courses, students do not yet meet the job-related training, competency, and educational requirements of professional and licensed social work positions. Therefore, field placements afford students the opportunity to engage with clients and communities as a component of their educational program and without a social work license, similarly to other educational, medical, or other health professional accredited programs. These educational experiences are structured as learning and not labor, and comply with the [U.S. Department of Labor Wage and Hour Division, Internship Programs Under the Fair Labor Standards Act](#).

The cost of a social work education is high. CSWE has successfully advocated for social work students to be eligible for federal grant, work-study, loan forgiveness or debt reduction programs to reduce the cost of this education and will continue to do so. CSWE also encourages programs and practicum sites to do whatever is possible to provide financial assistance. [Our most recent research shows](#) that about a third of the 2018 and 2019 MSW graduates reported receiving support from school-based scholarships. About 15% of graduates received support from an employer for their education and more than 11% received some form of government support.

CSWE understands and appreciates the commitment of students to their learning in field placements and will continue to identify and advocate for ways to reduce the cost of social work education for all students that preserve quality courses and learning experiences – in the classroom and in the field.